

## SPELLBOUND 661

### Chapter 661: Reunion

Evie slowly guided Onyx and told him in her mind to land just behind the men and Queen Beatrice. She kept her eyes on them as they turned around, excited at the thought of seeing her again. Then after Onyx settled on the ground, Evie nimbly leapt to the ground, waving her greetings at the men and her mother-in-law. Then she turned back and gestured for Zolan to get down as well. He had some slight difficulty in coming down from Onyx, as he had lost one arm and that affected his balance somewhat. However, after some maneuvering, Zolan jumped down sufficiently well for a one-armed man.

The vampires, except Queen Beatrice, were all standing there, eyes wide and paralyzed to the spot as they looked at that approaching figure. They stared at Zolan as though they were seeing a ghost. In fact, a couple of them even thought for a few seconds that it might be Zolan's ghost who was visiting them now.

None of them could even move until Zolan grinned and waved at them.

"I'm back!" he casually said, approaching them as the men raked him with their eyes from head to toe. It was that smart-ass grin and the bright lively glint in his eyes that made it all real for them. All at once, they broke out of their paralysis and swarmed over towards him, questions after questions flooding their minds but none of them could say anything yet.

"Z-z-zolan! Y-you're alive?!" it was Levy who managed to speak first.

"As you can see. I somehow managed to stay alive."

Levy ran straight for Zolan, crying out his name dramatically. Well, this time, the drama queen was not just being dramatic, but he was genuinely emotional. They all truly thought that their comrade was gone.

"Zolan!! You're really alive!" Levy hugged Zolan so hard that the man could not help but immediately complain.

"You're going to kill me Levy, you, dumbass." Zolan was laughing and as he said that he continued slapping Levy hard on his back, knowing that the man was literally crying right now.

"Do not grip him too hard you, dumbass!" Luc quickly pulled Levy off Zolan. "Can't you see he's hurt? Are you trying to kill him again? He just got back, damn it!" Luc was laughing helplessly as he dragged Levy back a couple of steps.

"I can't help it, dumbass!" Levy barked at Luc, wiping his tears.

"I know, but you're about to break his bones!"

While Luc and Levy were being chaotic again as usual, Reed and Samuel slowly drew nearer to Zolan. Reed's eyes were gleaming with tears as he hugged Zolan in a very careful manner.

"I'm... I'm so glad you're back!" Reed said in slightly shaky voice, while Samuel patted Zolan's shoulder gently. The big man was trying to be tough, but Zolan could tell how emotional their leader was right now with those tight set of his lips that could be seen. He could feel the overwhelming comfort and love from his fellow brothers no matter they voiced it out or not.

"And I'm glad everyone is here waiting for my return. I was so worried about you guys being too reckless... but it seemed that I should've been more worried about myself." Zolan joked, trying to cheer up his comrades.

"I've been telling you that for ages and you never listen." Samuel sounded like a naggy grandmother but at the same time relieved old man as he glanced at Zolan's empty sleeve where he had lost his arm.

Zolan just laughed while everyone starts asking him what had happened.

"They're really close to each other." Queen Beatrice commented as both she and Evie watched over the men's reunion.

"They've always been like that. They have such a strong brotherly bond." Evie replied with a soft smile, recalling all the times she had spent with these men, especially since her journey to Crescia.

But soon, the small reprieve had reached its end. They started to hear loud sounds, indicating that the giants were about to destroy the ice walls.

Evie then quickly touched everyone over their chest, imbuing them with a spell that would give them some extra protection like she always does whenever she parts from them.

"I wish I have some magic too," Levy said grinning as he was enjoying the shimmery feel of magic that was flowing through him at Evie's touch. "That way, I can give Your Majesty some protection too."

A small smile tugged at Evie's lips.

"You're already protecting me, Levy. Ever since the day Gav introduced you guys to me." Evie said, causing Levy and everyone to beam at her. They were blessed that their queen was so kind and always acknowledged their protection over her.

"I won't ask for anything else." Evie added as she removed her hand from Levy. "All I want is for all of you to survive this. So please be careful, everyone. I have only one order â€“ you are all required to survive and return to me!"

"We will definitely survive so we can keep protecting you, My Queen!" Levy exclaimed enthusiastically and everyone nodded.

"Good. I believe in you guys."

Evie finally turned and faced Queen Beatrice again.

The men on the other hand went over to Zolan one last time. Of course, Levy did not hug Zolan dramatically again. This time, he was more careful with his actions.

"I see you guys now have a new member in our team. Is she supposed to be my replacement?" Zolan whispered lowly to Levy.

Of course, Levy immediately stiffened at the words he had just heard. His eyes were wide as he looked at Zolan. "Y-you know he's a she?!" he stammered. Whispering.

"I somehow could tell."

"Oh damn it. I forgot you always somehow sense a lady no matter how much they disguise themselves."

"No. You guys are just a bit too slow when it comes to observing people." Zolan replied nonchalantly when Levy suddenly hushed him.

#### Chapter 662: Savior

"Shh... she does not like anyone finding out that she's a girl actually. In fact, I just accidentally found out myself. And that is the only reason why I know about it. Her name is..." Levy leaned even closer and whispered her name in Zolan's ear. "She's pretty badass." He grinned, not even bothering to reveal to Zolan that he had not actually seen Laiza's face yet. It did not matter to him though, because he was really liking his badass partner right now.

The twinkles in Levy's eyes as he talked about Laiza had Zolan raising a brow. "Oh... so it seems you have found the apple of your eyes in the battlefield, huh. Not bad, Levy... and here I thought you're going to end up resorting to kidnapping a maid from someone's palace soon." Zolan teased him.

Levy smirked, lifting his chin arrogantly at Zolan. "No, no, Zolan. I'm a huge fan of badass girls now."

"Let's go, dumbass!" Luc grabbed the back of his collar and pulled him off Zolan.

"Okay, see yah, Zolan! Take care of Her Majesty!" Levy waved as he walked backwards at the same time being dragged off by Luc.

"I will! Don't worry!" Zolan reassured them and he too, turned back and walked towards the dragon.

Once he was again settled on Onyx's back, Evie looked over her shoulder at him. "Are you ready?"

Zolan nodded. "Yes, My Queen." He responded and Onyx pushed off the ground, flapping his massive and powerful wings to bring them off the ground as the protective walls of ice crumbled and the fierce battle resumed again.

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The men Klauz had sent succeeded in their goals. Seeing that their first attempt worked, they had gathered and sent out another similar group to kill all the level five monsters ahead of them.

Klauz was speechless that the information from the queen was indeed accurate and had worked. In fact, it had been so successful that it was beyond their wildest dreams. Who would have thought that the weakest of the lot in their army would be the chosen ones who would be given the opportunity to end the lives of the strongest monsters? And how the hell had the queen managed to find out about this? This was clearly a massive cheat that she had acquired! However, Klauz was not complaining as this had not only spared his top warriors, but also, could allow their weakest members to be of utmost use to the army now.

He was just at a loss for words.

But now, everything seemed to be going in their favor. The tide of war was finally turning.

Without the threat of the level-five monsters, the army was no longer afraid to fight on and to advance. So they pushed forward with everything that they had. Initially, the monsters were only being pushed back – slowly but surely. However, as the army continued fighting, their combat spirits were triggered and raised even higher that they were literally annihilating their enemies and the army was finally advancing ahead at full speed.

There were still the giants to be dealt with, but the dragons were effectively dispensing them with the cooperative work between them and their riders.

Now they were confident that they were able to finally reach the final stage of this war and win the battle! The soldier's battle cries were resounding over and over, firing up their own spirits. It even boosted the flagging spirits of those who were in the rear as they were being healed from their wounds, making them raring to go back into the frontlines and continue on with their fight against the monsters.

Meanwhile, the elite vampires led by Queen Beatrice were now dealing with the troublesome giants who were still standing quite strong in their fight against the vampires. Though their numbers were slowly dwindling, killing them were still a pain in the ass because they had pushed themselves into the zone amidst their own soldiers. That had made fighting them a little more complicated as their moves had to be limited in the case where a strike from them might not only strike at the giants, but also accidentally extend and hit their own teammates.

These giants were truly smart in doing that, knowing that the dragons that were circling above them in the air could not use their dragon-fire to incinerate them when there were their own soldiers all around that would definitely be sacrificed along with them.

"Levy!!!" Luc yelled out when Levy was about to get crushed by a giant that suddenly leapt out from god knows where.

Levy had been hit pretty hard and was now sitting on the ground, trying to heal his wounds when the giant just suddenly appeared from above him. The others were a bit far off to be able to reach him in time.

"Shit!" he cursed, trying to at least throw himself to the side. But his leg was still broken and in the midst of mending.

"Levy!!!" another shout from his comrades echoed desperately. But no matter how he tried, he knew that it was impossible for him to make it this time. A wry smile spread across his lips, as he thought if this would be the end for him.

But then, an arm grabbed him. That was quite unexpected, and his face reflected his shock.

They both crashed and tumbled to the ground due to the impact. It seemed that whoever it was that grabbed him, had come flying at him at full speed.

When they finally stopped rolling like a pair of stones, Levy slowly lifted his head, wanting to thank his unlikely savior. He was on top of his savior, but the first thing he did was to look around for danger. He needed to ensure that the coast was clear before expressing his thanks for saving his life. No point expressing thanks when they might both lose their lives in the middle of appreciating it. When he saw that the giant who almost killed him was now being dealt by his comrades, he sighed out in relief.

"Get off me now, dumbass. You're unexpectedly heavy!" Laiza's voice echoed out in a complaint, and he instantly whipped his head down, already beaming the moment he recognized his savior's voice.

"So... you're my savior..." speech suddenly seemed to fail him midway.

His body stilled as he gaped at the woman beneath him. Maybe due to all that rolling and tumbling around, her mask was lost in the process and her face was now... in full view. She was... breathtaking!

"I said get off me! Now! Are you listening?" she scowled at him as she pushed at his shoulders with both hands.

Levy finally found his voice.

"I think... I think... that... I'm in love." He stammered, causing Laiza to gape at him, utterly speechless.

#### Chapter 663: Love-struck

As soon as Laiza snapped out of Levy's unexpected love confession or whatever that was called, she sighed and gave him a serious gaze. "Please stop being ridiculous and get off me. And do make it quick. A giant might trample us and kill us both."

She could not deny that her heart had just skittered to a stop for a moment there especially when she saw the gleam in his clear brown eyes as he said those words. But he should not be serious about it, right? There was just no way that this happy go lucky vampire was serious! She really could not believe that such a man like this one even exists.

Scrambling off her, Levy looked around for danger. His hands moved, patting around his waist, searching for his sword. Then he looked on the ground around his feet to see if it had dropped there. However, he still could not find it. His eyes searched around, a little further than where they were, and it was then that he saw his sword lying on the ground. He took a step forward, intending to collect his weapon. But Laiza called out to him and stopped him.

Seeing that he was still badly bleeding, Laiza too, quickly rose from the ground.

"It's better if you have yourself healed quickly." She said before she ran off and went to pick both their weapons lying a little farther away from them.

Once she returned and brought his sword over to him, she grimaced at the amount of blood that he was losing. Bending over, Laiza placed Levy's sword on the ground and squatted before him.

"Hey, are you okay? I think... I should call for your comrades –" Laiza frowned as she saw the blood pooling where he was seated.

"No need, no need. I'm fine." he grinned. And Laiza thought that it was a little foolish.

"You're not. That's too much blood!" She insisted, quite convinced that this person's brain must have been hit quite hard in the fight as well.

"It's already healing, don't worry. But I'm really happy that you're this worried about me." He winked flirtatiously, looking genuinely happy.

Speechless, Laiza could only give her head a shake and just focused her gaze on the wound on his abdomen. No matter what he said and no matter how wide he smiled, his situation was really dangerous right now. He needs healing magic or anything that could stop the bleeding this instant, or he would really die!

Just as she decided to call for the other vampires' help regardless of his protests, tiny amber lights suddenly appeared, dotting around his whole chest area. Then they started moving and circling like tiny fireflies all over his wounds.

"Y-you have magic?!" she exclaimed in shock as her eyes circled wide.

He blinked and creased his brows a little at her words, as though not understanding what she was going on about. But when he looked down and saw what made her say that, a gentle and proud smile tugged at the corner of his lips.

"Ah... you mean this?" Levy pointed at the little dots of lights that were currently circling around his chest, before looking at Laiza and grinning at her delightedly. "This is our Queen's magic. She called this her 'protection' and she always give these to us before we part from her. She's amazing, isn't she?" Levy sounded really grateful and was just proud that their queen really cared a lot about them, her subjects. In fact, there was no need for her to treat them so nicely like this. But the fact that she still did it, out of the goodness of her heart, made it all the more meaningful for the men. And that was why they looked up to her and followed her wholeheartedly, loyally and without any hesitation.

"She is." Laiza nodded. She had not expected that from the Light Queen. It seemed that the Light Queen was truly a kind woman. Now she truly knew that Queen Evielyn was a ruler worth dying for. And from the way she saw the elite vampire soldiers' interactions with her earlier, and also through the pride in Levy's tone, these men should be more than willing to die for her too.

She watched inquisitively as the Light Queen's magic did its work and slowly, it sealed his wound until it was no longer bleeding.

When Laiza returned her gaze back to Levy's eyes, she found him staring at her. His eyes seemed to be in a daze, as though looking... love-struck.

She cleared her throat awkwardly, hoping that he could snap out of it. But his gaze seemed to fall to her lips instead.

Her eyes stretched wide when he did that, and she subconsciously lifted her hand to touch her face, only to find out that her mask was no longer on her face. It was gone?!! When had it fallen off? Was it during that earlier tumble when she fell over with him?

Suddenly, she rose, ignoring the love-struck look he was throwing at her.

Then the vampire named Luc landed next to them.

"Are you alright?" Luc asked Laiza first and when she nodded, he rushed towards the seemingly dazed man still sitting on the ground. Laiza quickly searched for her mask as the duo talked.

"How's your injury? Pretty bad? Samuel asked me to send you to the rear to recuperate." Luc worriedly said as he checked Levy over, scanning him from head to toe.

But Levy just suddenly jumped and grabbed onto Luc's collar and said, "Luc... I think this truly is love..."

Luc blinked. "H-huh? What?" He could not catch on with the transition between his question on Levy's injuries to him suddenly saying something about... love?

"I think this is love, Luc." Levy said again, not minding that he had to repeat himself. He felt that he would not mind saying this over and over again as a foolish smile spread across his face.

"What the hell are you talking about you, dumbass?!!! Did you hit your head so hard that you had completely lost your mind?!" Luc scolded him.

Chapter 664: Scout

"No. It's not mind but my heart! I lost my heart... I'm in love, Luc!" Levy literally had hearts flying out of his eyes that Luc rolled his eyes hard.

Luc lifted his hand, wanting so bad to slap his frustrating comrade, but he stopped midway and just sighed like an old man so done watching a stupid man wasting his youth.

'Whatever! Might as well let him be happy in his own delusions.' Luc thought as he rolled his eyes again.

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Meanwhile, at the farthest side of the battle...

"Sweetie!!!" Azrael's loud shout echoed as he rallied his dragon. "Hurry!"

As if the dragon was annoyed at her loud and aggravating rider, her pace doubled that Azrael nearly got blown away.

"Oh damn! That's sick Sweetie! Yeah! That's my girl!!!" he continued with loud yells. He was oblivious to the fact that such a grown and big man like himself yelling 'Sweetie this' and 'Sweetie that' was just a scene that brought goosebumps – the bad kind – to any listeners. Thank goodness there were not many who could hear it.

After the many hours Azrael had fought the battle with his dragon, he was finally used to calling his dragon its ridiculous name. Well, right now, it no longer sounded as ridiculous to him anymore. In fact, he now found the name quite adorable for this cute dragon of his. The two of them had been working together so incredibly in sync and Azrael was just over the moon about it. In fact, he was more ecstatic about him being able to work seamlessly with Sweetie than compared to his previous accomplishments in war.

Of course, it had been quite challenging at the beginning, but as the battle went on, they eventually grew more in sync with each other and worked together faster than any other dragon-rider pairs. Except of course for the tandem of Vera and Azure, which was to be expected.

Azure truly was a one-of-a-kind dragon. He knew what exactly he was doing just like the Light Queen's Onyx. Having Azure paired up with Vera had actually made Azrael feel more at ease. He had seen multiple times how Azure had easily avoided dangers that otherwise would have been disastrous for Vera.

Azrael also noticed that Azure was definitely acting like an overly cautious old man. It really shocked him at first, but he later realized that it was because the dragon must have known that Vera was the last ice dragon master left in this world. And that was why he was taking the extra precautions in making sure that she would not get hurt in the slightest. And up till now, it still seemed to be the case.

Sweetie reached Vera and Azure in just seconds.

They were finally advancing. After they received the message on how to defeat the level-five monsters, they immediately executed it and had been met with success after success.

Now it was time to reach what they all thought as the final stage in this battle.

Ahead of them was an even thicker wall of darkness. This one looked as black as ink and all of them could feel the even more ominous aura oozing out from it. Just being this far away from it was enough to cause their skins to crawl with an incomprehensible feeling – as though that the moment they come into contact with that chilling black wall, something dreadful would happen to them.

Azrael had felt this before. It was similar to whenever they got near the heart of the abyss, they would feel this feeling crawl under their skin.

This was also how the well of darkness looked like, an inky and dark half circle that seemed to be planted on the ground. No... it was more apt to say that it originated from an unknown depth and had emerged out at ground level.

He could not help but think that this was actually 'the well' and it had grown so large! It was like the well had turned into a lake now. And if his theory was true and that this was indeed the well, they should not go into it no matter what!

Because... he had a feeling that they might never return once they crossed over into it.

Gideon was the only one who had managed to come out of 'the well' after he had jumped into it. The others who tried or accidentally fell into it had never once returned.

"What are we going to do?" Azrael asked Vera. His loud voice echoing out that even Leon and Zanya who were riding on Silver, that was on Vera's left side heard his voice.

Vera stared at the inky black wall of darkness. Her heart was racing, and blood was rushing loudly in her ears.

She had already heard about Azrael's theory, and she understood this would be dangerous – more than dangerous, in fact.

But all the monsters had already been annihilated. At least on their side. She had not yet received any news from Evie yet if they had finally killed all the monsters on their side.

According to Gideon's words before they separated, all monsters must be killed and not a single one must be left, even the lowest rank of all. And after that... she did not know what would happen next, but she believed in Evie. That Gideon will be saved after that.

But was this truly the final stage? How could they know that there were no more monsters inside this other wall of darkness? What if there were more of these walls further in? What would their strategy be then?

"We should test... just to be safe. I'll lead a team and go on ahead first." Azrael said. "We can't have you going in without knowing what's in there, right?"

Vera looked over at Azrael. Worry was etched on her face.

"Don't worry. I won't die." He smirked confidently. He knew what she was thinking even without her saying anything at all. "And since we still have yet to find Gideon, I believe he must be in there. Waiting for us to get to him. I'll just go in first to check out the situation."

## Chapter 665: Final obstacle

However reluctant she was with this suggestion Vera knew that this was the only way forward for now. They need to know what was waiting in there first before jumping in. Thus, having Azrael going in as their scout was the best option at the moment. But...

"I will be sending a signal to the dark fae commander using my magic." Azrael explained his plan. And after discussing further about their strategy and gathering a small team to enter the second wall of darkness, Azrael was finally prepared to go.

Vera approached him. She could feel a lump forming in her throat at the thought that she would be sending him ahead – as though she was sending him into an uncertain fate.

"Please take care." She said solemnly and Azrael smiled.

"I will. I'm going to return alive, I promise. And I'm really confident I will be able to keep my promise because well..." he touched Sweetie's snout and caressed it. "I have my sweet dragon now." The dragon made a noise that sounded suspiciously like a snort. If she was a person, she would have said 'hmph!' as she faced away from her annoying rider.

Vera giggled at the cute interactions with each other. She honestly had not expected Sweetie to get attached to Azrael that quickly. But this was good too.

Vera then approached Sweetie and whispered to her. "Take care of him and come back to me, okay Sweetie?"

The dragon made another sound and Vera considered that as a yes. She then put her forehead on Sweetie's snout as she said a short prayer in her heart for this scouting party, that they would return safe and sound, especially for Sweetie and Azrael.

Soon, they finally watched Azrael and Sweetie lead a small team and entered the inky dark wall.

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Contrary to what Azrael was expecting, the inside of the inky dark wall was not 'the well' yet. If it was the well, there should not be any ground that they could step on, right?

Gideon had mentioned before that if you enter the heart of the abyss, you will feel like you are falling into a void of darkness. This was not it, though. They were still all walking on relatively firm ground.

He was of course, thankful. But... this only meant that this was not to be over yet. They all assumed Gideon must be in the heart of the abyss, waiting for them there. And he was quite certain that they were already close to that well.

The darkness was so thick and heavy that it was hard for even him to see more than a few feet ahead of him. But they still had no choice but to moved forward, just being more careful and alert.

Azrael's suspicion that the battle with the monsters were not over yet seemed to be true. However, he had a feeling that this would be the final obstacle they must cross before they could reach to where Gideon was.

"Sweetie!!!" Azrael yelled as his dragon breathed out her ice breath ahead of them. The bright blue ice formed, and he saw something with wings got frozen inside before it fell heavily and shattered as it hit the ground.

Wide-eyed, Azrael gritted his teeth. What the hell?!! The enemy was a flying creature this time!!! It seemed that the enemy had upped their game.

From the broken up form on the ground, Azrael could see that they were smaller than the dragons. But if they were many in numbers that came attacking them at once...

Sweetie shrieked, breathing out her ice breath again. Another flying creature zoomed quickly above Azrael, and he used his magic to hit it. Shit! These ones were similar to bats. Bigger in size and also troublesome in number.

Looking closer, Azrael concluded that four of these flying creature was equivalent to one average ice dragon in size. They were also powerful, enough to grab a rider from the back of the dragons and the sickest part was that they also have pointed snouts as sharp as a blade. That would be fatal if it actually pierced through the dragons!

"Retreat!!!" Azrael yelled out his commands at his men who were all now on the ground as some men had already been taken by those flying creatures while they were still in the air. He had noticed that the flying creatures did not go after the men who were on the ground. They only targeted the ones who were in the air!

The men started to retreat.

"Sweetie!!! Retreat!!! Now!!!" Azrael yelled and he roared out in anger when he turned and saw his dragon's wings got pierced by the flying monster's blade-like snout. His eyes reddened as his murderous aura flared out. How dare these bugs hurt his precious Sweetie!

"F\*ck!!!" He immediately called up a barrier, furious to the point that he had wanted to tear the monster into a hundred strips with his own blade. But he clenched his jaws and held back, knowing he had to prioritize his actions now and had to urge Sweetie to return before their casualties increased.

The dragon immediately listened to him, but it was obvious that she was having a hard time due to the cut in her wing.

"You can do it, Sweetie..." he coaxed her as she flapped her wings and struggled to reach the wall.

Azrael kept looking back, constantly on the lookout for the flying creatures. The flying monsters relentlessly tried to pierce his shield and now with their growing numbers and increasingly stronger attack, the shield started to crack a little.

"Sh\*t!!!" he cursed, gritting his teeth as he tried to summon more magic to strengthen the shield. He could still escape by teleporting but... Sweetie could not be brought along. She would die! He could not teleport her. No one could teleport a dragon.

"There's no way I will leave my Sweetie! Damned you, monsters!!!" he yelled and his dark magic surged wildly through him, exploding out of his body and mending the broken cracks.

Chapter 666: Flying

"Where is Azrael?!" Vera shouted out as her eyes darted everywhere, trying to catch a glimpse of the person in question. Her heart was hammering uncontrollably within her breast as she anxiously questioned the soldiers who had just come rushing out of the inky dark wall.

"H-he's still in there, My Lady." One of the soldiers that just exited the wall replied to her.

"W-what happened? Why is he not back out here yet? Didn't he follow all of you out?" Vera was starting to feel really nervous. "He and Sweetie are coming now, right? Right?"

"There... there are flying monsters inside! The dragon's wing got damaged. Lord Azrael is still with the dragon." Came the soldier's answer, his voice shaky as he recalled what they had to face the moment they entered through the wall.

Vera's eyes widened in shock. Flying monsters?!

She whipped her head back to look towards the inky dark wall, clenching her fists tightly at her sides. She stood still and unmoving for a few seconds, as though contemplating something before suddenly nodding to herself. Then she ran towards her dragon.

But the dark fae commander blocked her way. "Forgive me, My Lady but if you're planning to enter the wall to rescue Lord Azrael, I cannot let you. We must discuss and make a plan first."

Vera shook her head. "We don't have much time left, Commander! We need to rescue him now! It would be pointless for a rescue if we missed this chance." Her tone was firm as a determined glint shone in her eyes. The commander knew that she was adamant.

"My Lady. Please calm down. Going in there for a rescue without a plan is just too dangerous –"

"But we don't have the time!" she cut him off. "Azrael and Sweetie might already... we can't delay anymore..." her voice suddenly seemed to be stuck in her throat after mentioning those two names.

While Vera and the commander was at a stalemate, a shadow emerged from the inky dark wall.

Then something crashed heavily onto the ground, sending a slight tremor across the immediate area that they were in. Everyone's eyes circled as they saw the form lying on the ground.

"SWEETIE!!!" Vera yelled as she rushed towards the female ice dragon. Her eyes were at the same time searching frantically for Azrael.

When she saw him still seated behind Sweetie, the extreme fear in her heart subsided by more than half. However, she was still concerned if they were terribly hurt or not.

"AZRAEL! Are you okay?" She surveyed him worriedly.

"I'm fine, princess, but Sweetie is..." Azrael looked at Vera pitifully, his suspiciously shimmery eyes silently asking for help. It was obvious that he more concerned about Sweetie's wellbeing than his own.

Vera looked at Sweetie, looking at her ripped left wing. The dragon was making a distressed sound. Vera could feel her heart ache as she heard the dragon's cries of pain. Though dragons are mighty and powerful creatures, injuries to their wings still hurt like hell!

Azrael had anxiously placed his hands on the edges of her ripped wing. But his magic had tremendously been weakened. He had spent so much of his own magic during their escape just a while ago. And it was only expected. Azrael had never thought that he could actually call out such immense power as how he had done just a while ago. He had thought that he was no longer able to make it as he had not expected how destructive those flying monsters were. They were so strong that he had to give his all, even pumping in magic that was beyond his limit, just for his shield not to break. Protection shields had never been his forte. In fact, it was his weakest skill. And that was why he was always been the one going on the offensive during any battles. And yet, for the first

time, he had managed to create such a strong shield that had actually managed to withstand the attacks of numerous flying monsters at once! If Sweetie had not been badly injured, he was quite certain he would already be jumping for joy and pride right now from his latest achievements.

"Damn, it's not working." He gritted his teeth and growled out in frustration.

"You need to give yourself a moment to recuperate, my lord." The dark fae commander said and stepped forward to offer his help, realizing that Azrael was exhausted from the excessive use of his magic energy. "Here, let me try."

Azrael sighed heavily before stepping aside and allowed the commander to try healing the dragon.

When it still did not work, Azure nudged Vera gently. His snout pressing lightly against Vera's back. That movement had guided her towards Sweetie.

Vera swallowed, shocked at what Azure was telling her to do through his actions. She already understood what Azure was trying to convey. He was urging her to do it. She did not have any magic like Evie even though she was acknowledged as an ice dragon master. What could she even do?

Nevertheless, the dark fae commander stepped aside and made way for Vera to step forward. The commander knew that they would need this dragon to be healed as soon as possible. Lord Azrael and this dragon were a formidable team just on their own and a big part of the army. Now that they had found out about the existence of these flying monsters, they would be needing all the dragons and their riders more than ever! Not a single one could be spared!

To the others who were looking on, the ice dragon master looked pretty clueless as she blinked her large eyes and was being pushed forward by her own dragon. But since they had literally seen how the great ice dragon had urged her to step forward, they suspected that she must be the only one who would be able to heal the injured dragon.

Vera glanced at Azure and then she lifted her hand according to the instincts that were guiding her and placed it gently over Sweetie's ripped wings.

#### Chapter 667: Vera's touch

At Vera's touch, a thin layer of ice started to coat the dragon's wings. Nothing seemed to be coming out from Vera's fingertips or palm, but the ice had just appeared as if it had been there all along and was just waiting for Vera's touch to be visible.

Everyone, including Vera herself, watched in awe as Sweetie started to tone down on her shrieks. Her massive body slowly relaxed on the ground as if a huge knife had finally been pulled out from her chest.

Once the ice had spread and coated the entire left wing of the dragon, Vera lifted her gaze back to Azure. Her eyes were asking him what she should be doing next. Should she take her hand off Sweetie now? Or should she wait a little longer?

Azure did not make any movement or sound and Vera did not know why, but she had a strong thought that it was a 'not yet'. She seemed to be instinctively able to understand what the dragon wanted to say to her most of the times.

For a little longer, Vera did not take her hand off and just kept it there until something like a puff of smoke, just a little bluer than the ice-dragon's breath, seeped out and spread all over the ice-coated wing.

Then Azure's wing carefully reached out to Vera and draped it on her shoulder, nudging her backwards. And the moment Vera stepped back and retracted her hand, the thin ice that was coating over Sweetie's ripped wing cracked. The cracks branched out and spread very quickly all over.

Sweetie then shook her wings out as if to get rid of the shards of ice that were stuck to her. The dragon's movement was very clearly no longer pained, nor did she cry out at all.

When Sweetie finally spread out her wings and the broken shards of ice all fell off, everyone looked on in awe. The ripped wing had already been magically healed!

Vera's mouth gaped open despite herself. Azrael too, jumped up for joy, utterly elated and relieved as he hugged his dragon. He did not care about the methods of how it happened, but after seeing that his darling Sweetie was whole and hale once more, he was just thankful and only wanted to rejoice with her.

A little while later, Azrael bowed his head to Vera. "Thank you, Princess." His voice was filled with gratitude and amazement.

"Oh... I really didn't..." Vera waved her hands, flustered at the sudden gratitude coming from Azrael. She still could not get used to being treated like she was someone so mighty and worthy of respect. "Uh, you don't need to bow your head like that, really..."

Azrael looked up and grinned at her, then leaned in and whispered in a conspiratorial manner to her. "Princess, you should really start getting used to this. Because after this war, I won't be the only who will be bowing my head to you. In fact, right now, if given the chance, most of us here would already be more than willing to lower our heads to you."

Vera could only nibble on the insides of her lips. That was still a bit too unthinkable for her. But she quickly shook her head and stop thinking this matter for now. This could be put aside for consideration later when she had the time. There were more pressing matters to attend to for now.

Now that Sweetie was fully healed and that it seemed as though she was the key in healing the ice dragon's injuries, they needed to plan for this next, most-probably the last, battle they were going to embark on. After this... she was going to head off on her rescue of Gideon. Her beloved. And she could not wait for that time to come.

Taking a few deep breaths, Vera squared off her shoulders and nodded at the dark fae commander.

The commander started revealing his plans to them. Of course, after having Azrael spilled out every bit of information he had found out from the other side of this other darker wall of darkness.

Once they were done discussing and came up with what they thought was the best strategy possible, they immediately sent a messenger over to Klauz and Evie to update them about the latest happenings.

While waiting for their responses, everyone took this pause in time to recuperate. They helped each other to heal wounds, and Vera went around to check on the wounded dragons and healing them back to their top form.

She was thankful that she did not seem to need any magic or extra strength to help in the healing of the ice dragons. It was like they had just needed her touch to activate their own healing ability that was seemingly locked within them. Vera's touch was akin to a key that could unlock that magical healing ability inside of them. And this was really incredible.

However, Vera was saddened to find out that there were already a few casualties that were way beyond what she could help. Five ice-dragons to be exact, had already fallen in battle. These, she had to say goodbye to, and there was nothing else that she could do for them.

She had immediately told herself that this was how war was. Loss of lives were inevitable. They had also lost many soldiers from the monsters in this war. But considering everything that they were going through, it was already a lucky thing to not have lost even more lives than what they already have.

Thinking about it, Vera did not know how she had even managed to face it so calmly. She had never been to any battlefield. She only managed to survive until now because she had been riding on Azure, and he had been protecting her perfectly. If she had been on the ground, fighting... she still could not help the shiver that came crawling under her skin as she remembered the bloodbath she had seen with her own eyes while she was circling above in the air. She could not count how many times she had to look away or shut her eyes instinctively when the monsters' tore their soldiers apart. But as the battle went on, she somehow managed to slowly build up the resistance and did not look away anymore.

"My Lady!" a voice echoed out and Vera quickly headed back to where everyone else were gathered as she knew that a response from Evie must have finally arrived.

#### Chapter 668: Signal

At long last, it was time for another battle to commence. And most probably, this would be the final battle too. Everyone was looking forward for it to begin, with the hopes that it would end well on their part.

After receiving the information from Vera several hours ago, they did not rush to cross the second wall. They had made sure to develop a few extra plans and strategies to have as their backups, just in case when the main strategy fails. They also took that opportunity to continue recuperating to regain their strength.

However, they knew they could not spend too much time planning and recuperating. They must end this battle as soon as possible. The sooner they move, the greater the advantage they would gain over their enemies.

Now the entire army was armed and ready to set forth. The soldiers were all prepared and were in their battle formation.

They were going to enter the second wall at once and opt for an all-out attack. This time, this will be the battle for the dragons. They were the ones who would be dealing out the main bulk of the attacks on their enemies. Of course, they would also end up receiving the majority of the enemies' attacks.

Each dragon now had more than two riders on their backs. The main rider will be focused on controlling and commanding the dragon while the others will be focused on protecting the dragons with their magical shields.

Queen Beatrice joined Vera on Azure's back as Evie had spread out the vampires. Since the vampires had the strongest vision, they were pretty useful to be the lookouts as they flew with the dragons.

The special team King Belial sent out as reinforcement were also spread out evenly. They were a team of dark faes with the strongest protective shield magic – and this was the ability they needed the most at this moment.

Looking around, Evie saw that each dragon now had at least five riders each, except for Onyx. Zolan and Kei, the light fae that had been with her for a while now remained as her companion. She did not need any more help since she believed that her protective shield alone was strong enough to protect Onyx. The other dragons however, needed the other stronger dark faes more. Also, she could not take the risk of having any of her dragons injured, or worse, perish in this battle. There were already so few of them left. Thus, she did not want to lose even a single one of them.

Taking a deep breath, Evie kept her eyes focused on the inky black second wall. Her amber eyes were glowing. She could feel that this was already the final stage. Once they get through this, they would go all out and annihilate all the remaining monsters inside and then they definitely would find and finally save Gideon.

That was the plan. They must win this war and save Gideon at all costs.

Slowly, Evie lifted her hand and kept it pointing up for a long while. Not moving, not speaking. Heavy silence reigned for a few breaths as everyone waited for her signal. Then Evie's light appeared like the explosion of many tiny suns.

That signal broke the stalemate. Battle cries roared again as their armies surged forth, entering the second and darker wall.

They advanced forward as fast as they could and before long, the flying monsters came at them. It was as what Azrael had reported from his earlier survey into enemy lines. And the intense war commenced. It was more intense than they ever expected. Despite their preparations, they still felt caught off guard.

The flying monsters were numerous. And because they were smaller, they were more agile and faster to dodge the dragon's attacks. Nevertheless, the dragons were still able to kill off many of them already.

The dark fae soldiers who did not have dragons, utilized their wings. They were in a more dangerous situation though, as they could easily get swarmed by those monsters. Fighting in the air was definitely harder than the battle on the ground for the soldiers. But they did not have a choice and could only do their best to fight on and survive.

For what seemed like a very long time, the battle did not cease nor slowed. The intensity since the first collision did not even reduce as the monsters came at them like a swarm of deadly bats.

Everyone had been forced to their limits right at the get go because they all knew that the very moment they dropped their guard down and tried to take a breather even for a moment, they could very well lose their lives. Their survival instincts had every single one of them fighting like they were possessed. It was all they could do.

And before long, there were both their comrades and enemies piling up on the ground below. Dead bodies were falling one after another. Ice and fire lighted up the thick darkness like thunderstorms scattered in the dark.

"Shit!!!" Reed cursed. The dragon he was on was falling. They had been surrounded by the flying monsters and their shields got pierced through. They had tried to fight back but their dragon got unexpectedly attacked from below where the shields were weaker. It was too late to save the ice-dragon.

They could only leave the dragon to save themselves. But Reed could not jump off as he did not have wings. The dark faes were already busy fighting for their own lives so he could not count on anyone to bring him along. His leg was also badly injured. He got the injury a while ago when he saved one of the dark faes with him from getting killed. He will probably break his leg bone if he jumped, but he did not have a choice. It would be way too late if he wanted to wait for it to heal.

Chapter 669: Don't fall

Seeing that another group of flying monsters were after the dying and falling dragon, Reed could only curse and jump off. He only hoped that he would not fall to his death. This height was really too much even for an elite vampire like him!

Just as he braced himself for the inevitable, Reed felt an arm wrapped around his waist. A sound of flapping wings sounded particularly loud in his ears.

Then they landed on the ground. Speechless, Reed looked up and saw their masked dark fae comrade who got separated from them when they were assigned to ride on different dragons. Since this dark fae had weaker magic and could not maintain a strong shield, she was not drafted to be one of the dragon riders.

Reed had seen how sullen Levy was when this dark fae had been instructed to join in another group.

"Are you alright?" she asked him after setting him down.

Reed nodded. "Thank you for the timely save." He replied, giving her a thumbs up. She truly was his savior there.

"Do you want me to bring you to another dragon? You need to join another one as your vision is much needed." She told him. Then her eyes landed on his wound. "But... I think you might need to get your injury healed up first."

Once Reed's wound was healed and no longer bleeding, he finally stood. Laiza was right, he needed to get back up there and fight. They were already hopelessly outnumbered. So he must find another team to aid as soon as possible. He knew that there were many teams who needed him. There were only that many of the vampire elites that had come along with Queen Evie. Thus, they were in hot demand.

But in order for him to do that, he must rely on Laiza. She was small-framed and petite. Looking her over, he really was hesitant as he wondered how he could even think of having her carry him.

"Alright, let's go." Laiza declared and she bent, placing her hand on his back and behind his knee.

"Wait a moment."

"Yes? Anything wrong?" Laiza only turned her head back to look at him from the corners of her eyes.

Reed blinked. "Are you really going to carry me like that? I mean... can I just maybe cling to you?"

"No can do." Laiza shook his head. "It would be easier for me if I carry you in my arms. So please stop complaining and just let me do what I need to do. We don't have much time to waste." She said in a serious and no-nonsense manner. Then without waiting for his response, she went ahead and bridal-carried him.

Before he could protest in embarrassment, her wings flapped and soon, they were flying up the sky.

Reed could only flush from this whole situation. He suddenly desperately wished that he had not found out Laiza was a girl. Damn that Levy!!

"Oh, there's a fire dragon. I think that's the dragon Levy was –"

"Behind you!" Reed yelled as he saw an incoming attack.

Laiza let them both fall, causing the attacking monster to miss them both by hair's breadth.

"Shit! That was close! Wait! It's coming back!"

Reed was starting to worry. There was nothing Laiza could do anything with him cradled in her arms!

Just as when he was about to tell her to let go of him, a blast of fire burst before them, incinerating the flying monster that was chasing after them.

Then they were swooped away by Crimson.

Levy literally had his jaw dropping to the ground as he looked at Laiza putting Reed down from the bridal-carry she had held him in. Reed on the other hand, looked away as his face was still burning.

"Damn man! Did you fall and beauty Laiza caught you? Huh? Reed?" Levy exclaimed. He had seen them getting attacked a while ago and had asked his comrades to turn Crimson around to go rescue them.

"Well... that's right. Our dragon fell and I had to jump." Reed explained, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Oh... are you alright?" Levy checked on him from head to toe.

"I'm fine. Laiza saved me, so I didn't fall. I came back up here with her help to find another team that might need me."

"Okay, we'll help you find one." The main rider butted in, and the dragon made a sharp turn towards the ice-dragon near them. "There you go. You'll be needed there."

"Well then, I'm going." Reed told Levy and when Levy gave him a nod, Reed looked at Laiza.

"Thank you for the help once again. Appreciate it."

After Laiza gave him a soft nod, Reed jumped onto the ice dragon's back.

"I'm leaving too." Laiza then said, causing Levy to press his lips tightly together. He looked visibly sullen again as if he wanted to tell her not to go but he could not. He could not be selfish and only

think of his own desires. Also, the division of the groupings had been determined by the Queen herself, and Levy would not dream of disobeying her orders.

"You're going back to the ground, right?" he asked rather reluctantly.

Laiza nodded and Levy breathed out in relief.

"Please be careful down there. Remain on the ground and stay safe." He said seriously. That was one of the few moments that this man talked seriously and looked so earnest.

Laiza smiled. "Don't worry. You should be the one who needs to be more careful. The battle is bloodier up here than down there." She spread out her wings. "Okay, I'm leaving. Don't fall."

"I might slip and fall. So make sure you'll be there to catch me, Laiza." Levy's playful voice followed her as she took off.

She could not stop the grin spreading on her face even if she wanted to, as she flew away from the dragon and back to the area where she was responsible for.

"Be careful! I love you, Laiza! See you!!!" the echoes of his yell still lingered in her ears even as the dragon had already long disappeared from her view.

Chapter 670: Black sun

The battle raged. Fiercer than ever as the bat-like monsters threatened to overwhelm them by their sheer numbers and agility.

They attacked relentlessly and fiercely to the point that that some dark fae's strong shields gets eventually pierced and broken.

Evie's was the strongest and no monster managed to break through her shield yet. But as they pushed forward, Evie was forced to focus her power towards a team that was now swarmed by the flying creatures. Their shield was broken and if she won't help them out, all of the riders will die including the ice-dragon.

She couldn't just let that happen so even though she knew it's risky, she went on and helped them. Her magic hit the monsters, the beam of light from her palm burned their wings and they fell like rain down below. Soon the team was freed. Evie immediately told them to land on the ground to recuperate as the riders were all badly injured.

"Your Majesty, watch out! On your right!!" Zolan shouted as he made a 180-degree spin, his arms outstretched as it swung powerfully with his sword gripped tightly in his fist. Evie reacted beautifully, totally in-sync with his warning as she dodged low on Onyx's back from the flying bat-like monster that had hurled itself down at them. Though Evie had a protective shield erected around her and her companions, that attack had somehow managed to pierce and get through her shield which was weakened due to her shifting her power's focus.

"Your Majesty, are you alright?" Kei turned back from her position to check on Evie.

"Yes. I'm okay." Evie turned her focus back to the front.

The three of them had set up a working momentum that flowed well between them since they entered through the second dark wall. Evie was in charge of managing and deflecting attacks as well as protecting Onyx from the front. Kei was in charge of the rear section while Zolan was to cover both the left and right flanks of Onyx.

After they entered through the second dark wall, their army of the first division had moved to the East quadrant. And as reported by Azrael, their enemies were flying monsters. However, the quick report sent to them was sketchy at best. It only mentioned that they resembled bats and could fly. Fast. But as Evie, Zolan and Kei observed these 'bats' as they fought their relentless attacks, it was clear that referring to them as that was in fact an insult to bats.

These monsters were just beyond ugly. They had furry bodies similar to sea minks – only much larger in size, with fur that was matted and in tangled clumps. However, its fur was a dirty olive green, ugly and a perfect representation of death and highly unappealing to the sight. Their snouts were sharp with a sinister rodent-like feel and had a pointed and elongated end, as though it were to function as blades that could slash clean through their enemies.

Looking closely, they saw that one side of the blades were serrated. The wounds that would be inflicted by these cruel blades would no doubt hurt like hell.

These creatures were definitely larger than the largest bats ever existed, and their wingspan were even more intimidating. With a body length of slightly shorter than 1 meter, the wingspan was truly impressive at a length of about 3.5 meters.

Though they were not as huge and intimidating as the ice or fire dragons, they were already big and sturdy enough to pick up any of the vampires or dark faes and fly off with them. In addition to their beady red eyes and mouths constantly hanging open with thick drool dripping off their jagged and thorny teeth, these monsters were just the thing that crawled out from one's terrifying nightmares.

The three of them continued fighting in sync with each other, pushing forward as they fought off and defended against a whole swarm of flying monsters that had come at them again.

Zolan's sword swished and sliced in exquisite yet accurate arcs from left to right, covering whatever attacks that Onyx were not able to catch, making it a stunning duet of sword slash on one side and blistering blasts from the fire dragon's mouth on the other side. Evie and Kei who were in the front and back were also having their own seamless cooperation of flashes of light beams zipping and zooming from them to their targets in a dizzying array of luminance.

To the enemies, these blinding streaks only signified their doom, but to the armies on Evie's side, they were signs that presaged the possibility of victory and the end of this damned war that they were hoping would end sooner rather than later.

"Zolan, make sure you take time off every now and then to search forward and inform on our route. Onyx and I will cover you while you're at it." She reminded Zolan to fully utilize his super vision as an elite vampire to plan ahead on their direction.

Zolan took a few seconds to quickly look around, before his eyes were fixed with rapt attention in one direction. He quickly pointed out the focus of his gaze and spoke.

"Your Majesty, there is something that kind of look like a really black sun this way. This seems to be the very centre or core of this dark abyss..." Zolan quickly reported to Evie. "I believe this could be the source of the darkness and the very heart of this abyss."

Nodding at him, Evie told Onyx through her mental communication to head for that direction. "Yes, that's our aim. The darkest core..." What she did not say out loud and only thought in her head was 'Gideon should be beyond that'.

Evie's eyes gleamed with intensity as she confirmed the change of direction to Zolan and Kei. And then Onyx set forth, incinerating the flying monsters with his fiery breath as he headed to their target.